

Sunset Park North Historic District

Borough of Brooklyn

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendaring January 22, 2019



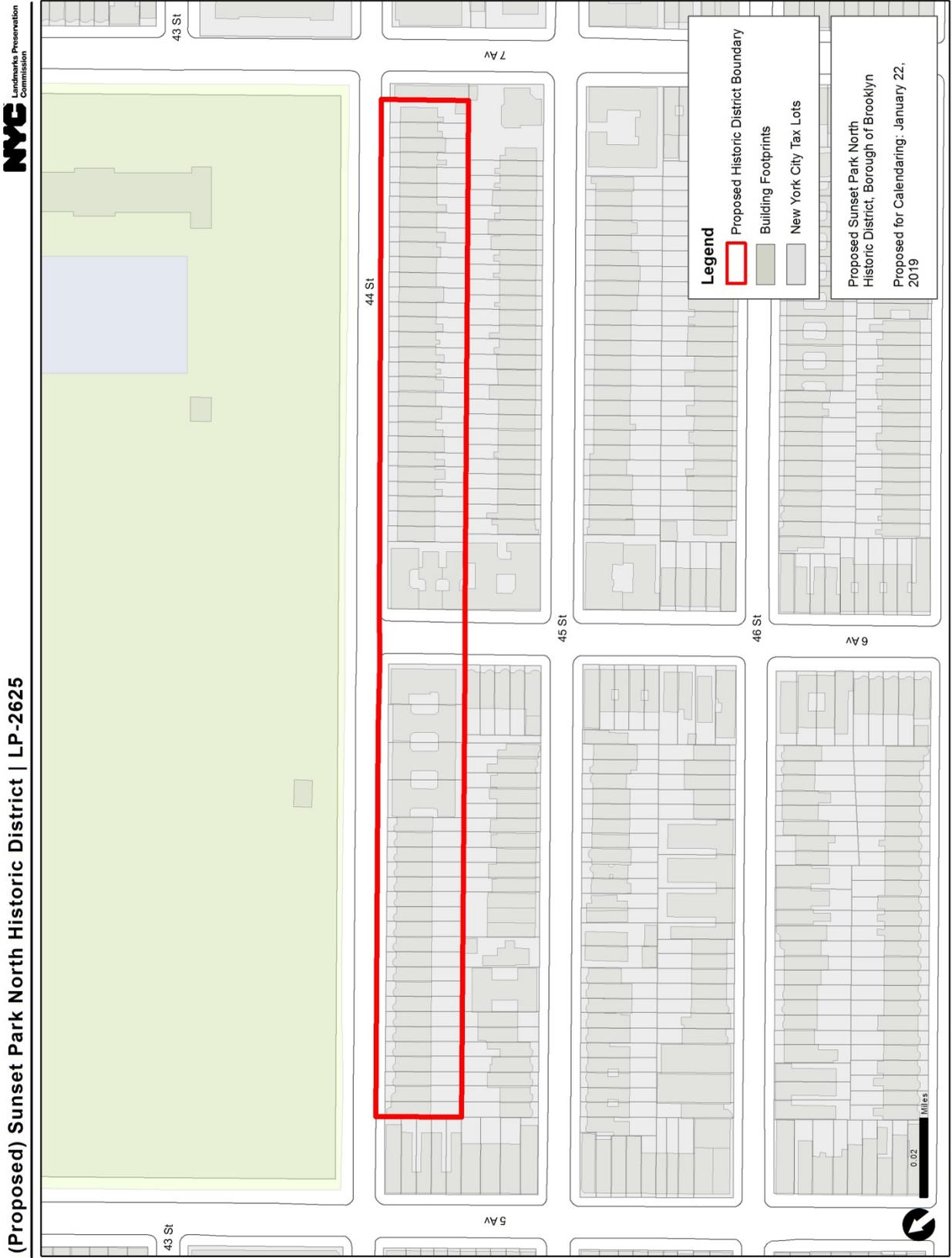
554 to 514 44th Street, LPC, 2019

The proposed Sunset Park North Historic District consists of approximately 56 buildings on the south side of 44th Street between 5th and 7th Avenues in the Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn. Constructed as the neighborhood was developing into a working- and middle-class community, the proposed district comprises two well-preserved blocks overlooking Sunset Park that are notable for their cohesive rows of limestone- and brick-fronted houses, and apartment houses with strong ties to Brooklyn's historic Finnish American community, all representing the neighborhood's architectural development at the turn of the 20th century.

Sunset Park was largely farmland until the 1890s, when it was transformed by new transportation links and the industrial development of its waterfront. Key to the neighborhood's growth were the 1889 opening of the 39th Street Ferry to Lower Manhattan and the 1893 extension of the Brooklyn Union Elevated Railway along 3rd Avenue, which linked the area with Downtown Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Bridge. The 1890s also saw the development of Bush Terminal, a waterfront complex of piers, warehouses, and factories that quickly grew into New York's largest commercial and industrial facility, employing 20,000 people. Formerly known simply as the Eighth Ward or as part of South Brooklyn, the neighborhood took its name in the early 20th century from the park planned in 1891 and completed in 1911 adjacent to the proposed district.

These transportation, industrial, and recreational improvements spurred construction throughout the neighborhood of speculative row houses to house port workers and professionals, including the proposed district's earliest residences at 614 to 682 44th Street (William Kay, 1903). As in the broader Sunset Park community, early owners and residents of these houses included Irish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish immigrants engaged in both blue- and white-collar occupations. Later development, including the 20 Renaissance Revival style row houses at 514 to 560 44th Street (Thomas Bennett, 1908) followed the 1905 announcement of the planned 4th Avenue Subway, which would reach Sunset Park in 1915. In 1913 and 1914, Eisenla & Carlson designed the four flats buildings on the southwest corner of 6th Avenue and 44th Street. These would soon be acquired by members of the neighborhood's Finnish American community and converted to cooperative residences, making them among the city's earliest co-op buildings.

Built as modest two-family houses by local architects and developers, the proposed district's row houses were designed in the Renaissance Revival style, one of the most popular styles of the day. Those between 5th and 6th Avenues feature elegant limestone fronts with classical detailing and round projecting bays, while those between 6th and 7th Avenues are somewhat more austere and faced in light-colored brick. The apartment houses were mainly designed in brick with an eclectic mix of classical and Arts and Crafts detailing. Though relatively modest in scale, the buildings within the proposed Sunset Park North Historic District are handsomely decorated and retain a remarkably high degree of historical integrity. With its special setting facing Sunset Park, the proposed district remains one of its neighborhood's standout sections, recalling its early development as an attractive working- and middle-class residential community created by local architects and developers for both native-born and immigrant New Yorkers.



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 18v1, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, LCR, Date: 1.15.2019